



RCD Outlook 2004

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Tulare County RCD Collaborates with Partners to Successfully Eliminate *Arundo donax*

In 2003, the Department of Conservation (DOC) awarded the Tulare County Resource Conservation District (TCRCD) a grant to remove the highly invasive *Arundo donax* or Giant Reed from the upper Kaweah watershed. This noxious weed uses an incredible amount of water (500 gallons of water per square yard per day), creates virtually no habitat for wildlife, undermines the integrity of stream banks, provides tremendous fuel for fires, and out competes the vast majority of native plants. It can grow over 30 feet in height and establishes thick stands, which animals find difficult to penetrate. This species is drought tolerant, highly susceptible to fire, and spreads rapidly. If left unchecked, it will destroy riparian habitats and overwhelm native species of plants, quickly forming a monoculture.

Local landowners in the community of Three Rivers in Tulare County identified stands of *Arundo* in the upper Kaweah watershed and contacted the RCD for help. Immediately, the RCD began working on a plan to eliminate this growing threat. During 2001 and 2002, volunteers mapped infestations throughout the area. In 2002, TCRCD, NRCS, and the local land trust conducted a two-day removal project using California Conservation Corps crews. Although this effort was successful, more work needed to be done. The DOC grant provided the TCRCD with the resources to expand the program.



Community volunteers work hard to remove *Arundo donax*

Working with its partners, TCRCD created a survey team, who spent the next four months identifying and mapping existing *Arundo* infestations. This information was entered into a database to establish a baseline and to monitor future growth patterns. After reviewing and analyzing the information, TCRCD was ready to begin on-the-ground activities.

The first step was to cut down the stalks using machetes, chainsaws and other means. The remaining stems left protruding from the ground were dabbed with the herbicide

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Tulare County RCD (cont.)

Rodeo®. Crews carried the cut stalks to a waiting slat-rail truck, which transported them to a staging area to be burned. The operation was very labor intensive. More than 15 truck loads were hauled from the removal sites. TCRCD relied on both volunteers and



Army Corps of Engineers slat rail truck loaded with Arundo donax

paid staff, especially Community Services and Employment Training (CSET) crews. CSET is an organization dedicated to providing local youth with work experience and educational opportunities. In collaboration with their partners, TCRCD was able to conduct six very successful weed removal days.

In addition, TCRCD purchased a display unit, which will be used at local events to teach and educate Tulare County residents about the detrimental impact *Arundo* and other invasive plants have on a watershed.

TCRCD and its partners were successful in eliminating several large stands of *Arundo*, developing baseline data, and educating the residents of Three Rivers. During the project, many local citizens who were previously unaware of the threats posed by *Arundo* became energized and are now actively involved in striving to eliminate this noxious plant from their community. TCRCD's efforts were instrumental in solidifying community support, building stronger partnerships, and addressing a critical local concern. Due to TCRCD's leadership and dedication, this project was an overwhelming success.!

Written by Robert Shun, Grant Coordinator

12th Annual California Envirothon Held

The California Envirothon held its 12th competition this past April at Highland Springs Resort in Cherry Valley, California. Sixteen teams of high school students from Sacramento to Riverside participated in this year's competition.

The California Envirothon is a special project of the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts, related state and federal agencies, and other organizations. The California Envirothon program is designed to be a written and hands-on competition of high school students' knowledge of California's natural resources in five categories:

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DOC Watershed Coordinator Grant Program

The watershed coordinators funded through DOC of Conservation's Watershed Coordinator Grant Program have once again proven to be a highly motivated group dedicated to improving California's watersheds. The extension round of funding, which went from July 2002 to December 2003, is now complete. The 18 coordinators achieved many of successes including helping landowners implement best management practices, establishing self-sustaining stakeholder groups, raising community awareness of watershed issues, and raising money to implement watershed improvement projects. During the 18 month period, watershed coordinators secured an additional \$14.2 million in funding for watershed improvements, which is a return of 12:1.

Several of the RCDs funded through the program have conducted extensive outreach to local landowners and provided them with assistance in implementing best management practices. For example, Coastal San Luis RCD has helped landowners install 32 conservation practices to date, assist 21 landowners in obtaining cost share funds, and help landowners obtain nine permits.

Grantees, such as Napa RCD, have been extremely successful in initiating stakeholder groups and helping them become self-sufficient. In three years Leigh Sharp, the watershed coordinator, has initiated five stewardship groups on five different Napa River tributaries. The stewardship groups worked with the coordinator to complete a revegetation project, repair a fish ladder for improved fish passage, and conduct creek clean-up events. The



The Napa RCD Watershed Coordinator works with a Carneros Creek stewardship group to develop a watershed assessment.

demand for assistance starting new stewardship groups in the watershed is still high. The RCD plans to use a portion of their new watershed coordinator grant money to continue their support of the stewardships.

Other grantees conducted extensive public outreach. For example, Shasta Valley RCD used their coordinator to raise public awareness about watershed issues. The coordinator facilitated several workshops and community meetings which reached over 600 community members. During the extension grant, 39 local residents participated in restoration field trips, 62 volunteers participated in stewardship field trips, 55 volunteers participated in River Cleanup Days,

and 373 volunteers participated in watershed partnership events.

These are just a few of the success stories that resulted from the extension round of watershed coordinator funding. To find out more about the accomplishments of the grantees visit the DOC website at <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/RCD> to read our reports to the California Bay-Delta Authority (CBDA) on our publications page.

As a direct result of the coordinators' successes, DOC was able to partner with the CBDA to launch an expanded three-year, nine million dollar grant program. The new program began

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Watershed Coordinator (continued)

last summer with the release of the Request for Proposals. In November, DOC received 82 grant proposals requesting over fifteen million dollars, once again demonstrating the need for watershed coordinators. DOC received proposals from 35 RCDs, 23 non-profit organizations, 13 local government agencies, and 11 special districts (other than RCDs). Furthermore, many of the applicants collaborated to submit comprehensive proposals, which ensured watershed issues were addressed on a watershed-wide basis.

The selection panel recommendations were announced in March and finalized by CBDA in April. Forty eight proposals were selected for funding representing watersheds around the state.

The new program will allow coordinators around the state to facilitate the development of watershed plans, conduct outreach, increase watershed awareness, obtain funding for watershed improvements, and oversee project implementation. We look forward to working



*Central Coastal Watershed in
San Luis Obispo County*

closely with grantees to ensure another successful program. Watershed Coordinators have proven to be an essential element of successful watershed programs that are supported by the community. The continued funding is sure to produce valuable benefits to California's watersheds.

We want to thank all of the coordinators for their hard work and dedication toward improving California's watersheds. Because of the successful efforts of the original grantees, a new expanded program is underway to benefit watersheds throughout California.

Upcoming Training for RCDs

Jenny Di Stefano, DOC resource specialist, will be holding a multifaceted RCD training session at the Concord Farm Bureau on August 2, 2004. The training will cover a variety of topics including: Personnel Management, the Brown Act, and RCD Board Roles, Right's and Responsibilities.

The training is scheduled as follows: Personnel Management (10am - noon); Brown Act (1pm - 2pm); and - RCD Board Roles, Right's and Responsibilities (2 pm - 4:00pm). You are welcome to attend one or all of the sessions.

The Farm Bureau is located at 5552 Clayton Road in Concord. You can find directions on the Contra Costa RCD website at <http://www.ccrdc.org> Please call Jenny at 916-324-0774 if you plan to attend or if you have any questions.

Let us know if you are interested in scheduling a training in your area. Training is available upon request on a variety of topics and may be tailored for one or more RCDs. Call Jenny if you would like to receive a list of training topics currently available.

Coming Soon!

An **RCD Leadership Academy** is currently being developed by the CARCD, DOC, NRCS, CODE partnership. The academy is being designed for RCD directors who are interested in accepting greater responsibility for the conservation movement.

The goals of the academy include:

- * Building the capacity of RCDs.
- * Increasing public awareness of RCDs in California.
- * Developing valuable leadership skills.
- * Creating new RCD leaders.
- * Helping RCD directors reach their full potential as conservation leaders.

The academy will consist of training sessions and experiences designed to challenge and inspire RCD directors. To ensure successful results that best meet RCD needs, the partnership would like the Academy to be developed with input from RCDs. Please contact Jenny at 916-324-0774 or email rcd@conservation.ca.gov to provide suggestions or comments.

Grant Writing Help

RCD Assistance Program Staff are available to review your grant applications for state and federal grant programs (excluding Dept. of Conservation programs). The staff will review your applications and provide you with suggestions where appropriate. Contact Jenny at 916-324-0774 or send her an email at jdistefa@conservation.ca.gov for more information.

Envirothon (cont. from page 2)

soils, forestry, wildlife, aquatics, and a current environmental issue. This year's current issue was "Natural Resource Management in the Urban Environment."

The students were tested on the five subjects and gave oral presentations on Thursday, April 22nd, which happened to be Earth Day. After a day of testing, the students participated in a scavenger hunt. That night they were given a compass along with directions to find the prizes hidden around the resort. We are happy to report that all the prizes were found and no students were lost.

Awards were handed out on Friday, after the final oral presentations were done. The winner of the Aquatics, Forestry, Soils and the Current Issue stations was the Arlington High School American Lions. The winner of the Wildlife station was San Clemente High School.

The top three teams were Arlington Mountain Lions (3rd place), the Redlands High School Angry Beavers (2nd place) and the overall winner was the Arlington High School American Lions. The American Lions will now move on to West Virginia where they will participate in the Canon Envirothon July 24th to August 1st. They will be competing against teams from 48 states and eight Canadian Provinces.

For more information on the California Envirothon visit our website at www.caenvirothon.com.

Written by Greg Lowden, President of the Ca Environthon Committee

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Flex Your Power at the Pump

http://www.fypower.org/save_gasoline/

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The RCD Outlook newsletter is intended to provide RCDs with helpful tips and updates on RCD work statewide. If you would like to be added to the mailing list please feel free to call the RCD program staff at 916-324-0774 or send an email to rcd@conservation.ca.gov.